



**ARIZONA READY EDUCATION COUNCIL
GRADUATION/DROPOUT PREVENTION TASKFORCE**

April 6, 2012 @ 10:00 a.m.

Governor's 2nd Floor Conference Room

1700 W. Washington

Phoenix, AZ 85007

Meeting Notes

Members Present: Chair Merl Waschler, Dr. Jim Zaharis, Diane McCarthy, Pearl Esau, Darcy Renfro, Dr. Amy Schlessman, Rhian Allvin, Dr. Kent Scribner, Mark Dobbins, Cathleen Barton and Marv Lamer.

Members Not Present: Carolyn Warner and Amanda McAdams

Staff Present: Debra Raeder-Gay, Rebecca Gau, and Kerry McConnell

1. Call to Order, Welcome, & Introductions

Chair Merl Waschler called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m., provided welcoming remarks and asked members present to introduce themselves.

2. Update and Discussion: Review of Council Goals & Strategies

The Taskforce received a brief overview of the Council goals, key strategies in the Arizona Ready Education Plan to accomplish these goals, and information on the Arizona Ready website. These goals, strategies and the website form the foundation for which the taskforce is to work.

3. Review and Discussion: Dropout Recovery Legislation

Jan Brite, Arizona Department of Education, provided the taskforce with a brief overview of the state statute that allows school districts and charter schools that provide instruction to high school students to offer a dropout recovery program. The legislation was passed in April 26, 2011; amended in March 2012; and becomes effective on July 1, 2012. The Department is currently engaged in the rulemaking process for this legislation. Ms. Brite provided information that has currently been drafted for presentation to the State Board of Education in May. The taskforce is being asked to review this information and provide input prior to the May Board meeting. Cursory issues identified in the brief discussion include that no threshold age has been identified; and that metrics of success need to be tied to the goals of the Arizona Ready Education Reform Plan.

4. Update & Discussion: Review of Graduation/Dropout Data

- Definition of Grad/Dropout Rate
 - Review Grad Rate/Dropout Data

Kerry McConnell provided a brief review of the Council's data and metrics on graduation/dropout including dropout rate; graduation rate; graduation rate definition; data on why students dropout; and what makes students return to school. Kerry also reviewed the metrics for the Arizona Ready Education Council Report Card.

5. Review & Discussion: Taskforce Work Plan/Strategies

John Garcia, Executive Director of the Arizona College Access Network, addressed the Taskforce and explained the work they have undertaken to identify college access programs that direct services to underserved students including dropout prevention strategies. The Taskforce was in consensus that this work could assist in developing an asset map of dropout assistance and recovery programs. Also briefly discussed was the need to help schools determine the effectiveness of these programs.

The Taskforce reviewed the 15 Effective Strategies for Reducing the Dropout Rate developed by the National Drop Out Prevention Center. The members agreed that an enormous amount of time, effort and research had gone into these strategies and focused the rest of the meeting discussing and prioritizing the strategies based on the greatest need in Arizona. The Taskforce discussed several issues at length, including the need to fully understand why students in Arizona drop out of school, what data is available to inform the dropout discussion, as well as the need to further explore expanding the definition of the graduation rate. Following this discussion, the Taskforce directed staff to develop a work plan for their reaction.

6. Council Comments & Next steps

- The Chair announced that Darcy Renfro would serve as co-chair of the taskforce.
- Taskforce requested more information/data specific to Arizona on why students drop out of school
- Taskforce requested staff develop a work plan for their reaction, focusing on the identified strategies and provide suggestions for: lead partners; goals; challenges and barriers; data requirements; key policy levers ;etc.

7. Call to the Public

Merl Waschler

There were no requests from the public to address the Taskforce.

8. Adjourn

Merl Waschler

With no further business before that Taskforce, Chair Waschler adjourned the meeting at 12:02 pm.